

REMARKS

Claims 1, 3-11, and 13-17 remain in the application including independent claims 1, 11, and 17. Claims 2, 12 and 18 have been cancelled. New dependent claims 19-23 have been added. Claims 4-9 and 13-16 are indicated as allowable.

The drawings have been corrected to change one of the reference numbers from "108" to "112" in Figure 11. A corrected sheet of drawings is attached hereto. Applicant believes that all drawing objections have now been overcome.

Claim 11 has been amended to address the examiner's claim objections. Applicant believes that all claim objections have now been overcome.

Claims 1 and 17 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by Stojanovski. Claim 11 stands rejected under 102(e) as being anticipated by Aoki. Claims 11 and 17 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by Blakesley. Claim 2 has been incorporated into claim 1, claim 12 has been incorporated into claim 11, and claim 18 has been incorporated into claim 17. Thus, the above prior art rejections are moot in light of the subject amendments.

Claims 1-3, 10-12, 17, and 18 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by O'Boyle. Claim 1 includes the feature of a sensor mounted on the rigid member for measuring strain exerted on the rigid member by an input force applied to the seatbelt portion. The sensor assembly in O'Boyle does not measure strain. O'Boyle utilizes a Villari effect sensor 20 that includes a magnetostrictive senor rod 22 positioned within a sensor chamber 32 defined by a sensor housing 30. A plunger 40 is disposed within the chamber 32 and is movable in an axial direction. A spring 50 is disposed between the plunger 40 and a second end 26 of the

sensor rod 22. Pull rods 60 are secured to the plunger 40 at one end and are secured to a pull rod head 70 (mounted to the vehicle frame) at an opposite end.

When seatbelt tension increases, the sensor housing 30 is pulled away from the pull rod head 70, which forces the plunger 40 to compress the spring 50 against the sensor rod 22. This compressive force changes the magnetic permeability of the rod. As the magnetic permeability changes, the sensor 20 generates an output 29 that is responsive to the amount of compressive force acting on the rod 22. Thus, the O'Boyle sensor does not teach the use of a sensor for measuring strain as claimed by Applicant, but instead teaches the use of a sensor that is responsive to a *compressive* force. Thus, O'Boyle cannot anticipate claim 1.

Claim 11 includes the feature of a first boss portion extending outwardly along a portion of the first edge of the flat body portion and a second boss portion extending outwardly along a portion of the second edge of the flat body portion wherein the flat body portion and the boss portions define a guide.

The examiner argues that O'Boyle teaches the use of a bracket 20 comprising a flat body portion 30 that is defined by a first end 38, second end 36, first and second sides, and a plurality of boss portions 60 extending outwardly along the first and second edges. Applicant disagrees. Elements 60 in O'Boyle are not part of the flat body portion 30. Elements 60 are actually pull rods that cooperate with the plunger 40 to apply a compressive force to the sensor rod 22.

Further, the rods 60 do not extend outwardly along the first and second edges of the body portion 30 as claimed by Applicant. First, the rods 60 in O'Boyle are movable relative to the first and second edges of sensor housing 30. Further, the rods 60 are mounted inside the sensor

housing and within the sensor chamber 32 and thus, cannot extend outwardly along the edges of the body portion 30.

Finally, while it is well settled that the terms in a claim are to be given their broadest reasonable interpretation, this interpretation must be consistent with the specification, with claim language being read in light of the specification as it would be interpreted by one of ordinary skill in the art. In re Bond, 15 USPQ2d 1566, 1567 (Fed. Cir. 1990). Here, the examiner has improperly expanded the meaning to be given to the claim terms “boss portions.” Figures 8, 9, and 11 and the accompanying description in the application clearly show and describe Applicant’s “boss portions.” One of ordinary skill in the art simply would not consider the rods 60 of O’Boyle as corresponding to the claimed “boss portions,” especially as O’Boyle clearly describes the rods 60 as part of the sensor assembly. Thus, for the various reasons set forth above, O’Boyle does not anticipate claim 11.

Claim 17 includes the steps of pivotally mounting a guide member at one end between the rigid plate member and the vehicle structure and isolating the seatbelt force sensor from input forces applied at an angle by guiding the seatbelt portion with the guide member. O’Boyle does not teach these features.

The examiner argues that O’Boyle teaches pivotally mounting the guide member 70 at one end between the rigid plate member 30 and the vehicle structure via structure 72. First, there is no disclosure that this connection at 72 is a pivot. Further, the structure 72 is described as being a bolt hole. Thus, the guide member 70 is actually fixed at one end to the vehicle structure with a fastener and is not pivotable.

Second, the guide member 70 is not positioned between the rigid plate member 30 and the vehicle structure. When the guide member 70 is fastened to the vehicle structure, the vehicle structure would be to one side of the guide member 70 while the plate member 30 is positioned at an end of the guide member (see Figure 1).

Finally, there is no teaching in O'Boyle of isolating the sensor from input forces applied at an angle by guiding the seatbelt portion with a guide. The examiner has not indicated where in O'Boyle that this feature is disclosed or taught. Thus, for the various reasons set forth above, O'Boyle does not anticipate claim 17.

Applicant believes that no additional fees are necessary, however, the Commissioner is authorized to charge Deposit Account No. 50-1482 in the name of Carlson, Gaskey & Olds for any additional fees or credit the account for any overpayment.

Respectfully submitted,

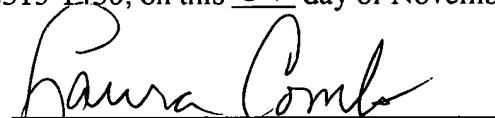


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CERTIFICATE OF MAIL

I hereby certify that the enclosed Response is being deposited with the United States Postal Service as First Class Mail, postage prepaid, in an envelope addressed to Commissioner for Patents, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313-1450, on this 21 day of November, 2003.


Laura Combs